Referee Committee Meeting Minutes - FINAL
4/10/2024
7:30p E via Zoom

1. **Welcome**
    a. **Call to Order** – *Start Recording*
    b. **Committee** – *Bryan Fraser, Derek Blazo, Terry Friel Portell, Jess McAlear, Jim Dwyer, Mike Murphy, Elaine Roden, Kathleen Crowe, Kris Thorsness, Letcher Ross*
    c. **Absent** – *Bob Appleyard*
    d. **Staff** – *Hugh McAdam, Referee Program Associate*
    e. **Guests** – *Frank McClintick, Patty Hyatt*

2. **USRowing updates – Hugh**
    a. **News at USRowing** – *More members of the Olympic Team were selected.*
    b. **Regional championships update/nationals**
        i. **New Timing partner**
            1. *Hugh – USRowing is changing timing companies. We're switching to Team Time. This will work different than HereNow. There will be dedicated USRowing staff dedicated to timing USRowing regional and national events.*
            2. *Terry – This was just announced internally today. Sarah has asked me for a meeting to understand how we will work with them. If anyone has any thoughts on questions and hiccups you've had in the past, shoot them to me.*
    c. **Insurance coverage for referees - FAQ to come from Jules.**
        i. **Volunteer/employment status of referees**
            1. *Hugh – Refs are Paid Volunteers with $6M liability insurance thru Membership.*
            2. *Terry – Jules said it's the same coverage as last year.*
            3. *Kris – So an HR Consultant was conferred. Is that HR person an attorney?*
            4. *Hugh – They are an HR expert.*
            5. ***TO DO:** Get something in writing about referee status.*
            6. *Kathleen – Some of us get 1099's. The difference is a Stipend vs Per Diem.*
            7. *Terry – We didn't need a 1099 if it was less than $600. More is tax triggering.*
            8. *Kathleen – You're going to go over that by working Regionals and Nationals.*
            9. *Terry – Yes if you work two events. If you only work one, you should be ok. We need to double check on the tax. Hugh, please take that as a To-Do.*
            10. *Derek – If we're volunteers legally, we shouldn't be getting 1099's ever. I had to file self-employment which required a more expensive tax filing package.*
            11. *Jess – What's a paid volunteer? Is there a limit as to how much they are paid?*
            12. *Kris – I've also never heard that term. It's a conflict of interest.*
            13. *Hugh – I'll see if we can get someone who knows in our next meeting.*

d. Review Drone policy - see below.

i. *Hugh – This has come up in a couple of instances now. Fully aware that it's essentially impossible to find on the USRowing website. According to conversations, the policy has not changed since 2021. The verbiage at the bottom of this agenda is current.*

ii. *Bryan – My main concern is that there's currently no exception in that policy for broadcast drones. I was at Crew Classic this weekend. What is the enforcement mechanism for that?*

iii. *Hugh – If it's an associate of a team that is racing, that team can be subject to disqualification due to unsportsmanlike conduct. If it's not affiliated, they can be asked to leave. This is at the discretion of the Chief Referee and the LOC.*

iv. *Kris – I'm assuming that we're the ones on the water, we'll be the best to identify if a drone is on top of crews. How are we supposed to identify who the drone is associated with, so that we can enforce penalties?*

v. *Hugh – What I would do in that situation is to call it into the LOC right off the bat and have them put the kibosh on all drones that aren't associated with broadcasting.*

vi. *Kris – Who's going to be doing the measuring?*

vii. *Hugh – Referee discretion.*

viii. *Kris – That's not what policy says.*

ix. *Hugh – Because it's policy, it gives referees a bit more discretion. If you feel the drone is causing interference, you can put the kibosh on it.*

x. *Terry – It should go to the Chief. The Chief will work with the LOC to identify who is driving the drone. I've dealt with this at several regattas.*

xi. *Kris – We're talking about this policy that talks about distance. Now Hugh is talking about interference. Those are two different things. Is the policy going to be distance-based, or is it about interference?*

xii. *Terry – It's about distance. At that distance, it shouldn't be causing any interference visually or audibly. If you feel they're too close, talk to the Chief. When I've worked with broadcast drones, we've had meetings in advance with the TV operators, with the drone people to ensure everyone knows what is ok and what isn't.*

xiii. *Elaine – I'm also with Kathleen. Kathleen's concern is, are there limits on where the drones can be at the Start? Can they hover next to the Start Tower? I remember one Starter being so distracted that they delayed the start until the drone moved away.*

xiv. *Hugh – This is the basic policy right now. Any Chief Referee, in conjunction with the LOC, can determine what the drone coverage will be. That might be an opportunity for us to change the language to say 10m behind the trailing referee launch.*

xv. *Elaine – We should include all the things we're concerned about for safety.*

xvi. *Derek – I just pulled up YouTube, and I have shots of a Drone right over a 1x or a 2x.*

xvii. *Bryan – That is one of the concerns I have with that drone company. I guess it's applying the standard and making more people aware of it.*

xviii. *Derek – My recommendation is to add this to the registration policy. Then USRowing can go over the rules. They know going in whether they'll have a drone or not.*

xix. *Terry – I totally agree, it needs to go into the Regatta Packet.*

xx. *Bryan – Is it just making the Chiefs aware of the policy as well? In my opinion, what it comes back to, is referees are responsible for safety of athletes on the water. If a drone crashes out of the sky and hits a trailer in the parking lot, yeah, that's a bad thing.*

xxi. *Hugh – It's hard to enforce a policy that you don't know about.*

e. **Rule book**
    i. **Posted on USRowing.com; hyperlink still being worked on** – *This will be up at the end of this week. It got punted around a little bit. Everything looks great.*
    ii. **have all been distributed?** – *Rule Books are out. If anyone is aware of anyone who hasn't gotten it, let me know and I'll mailed it out.*

f. **IOP changes –**
    i. **current version (dated 3/2024) needs to be posted in RefCorps.**
    ii. **NRR –**
        1. *Hugh - Amanda has agreed to the Committee's recommendation to the NRR's. Her question is if we want to remove them immediately or for 2025.*
        2. *Elaine – Well it's in the rule books that are already printed.*
        3. *Hugh – Yes, but we can still remove the requirement.*
        4. *Derek – We should remove it immediately.*
        5. *Mike – It's kind of a moot point as we haven't made it a requirement.*
        6. *Hugh – Awesome, I'll update Amanda immediately after the meeting and make those changes to the IOP.*

g. **Regatta Print projects status –**
    i. **New Assistant packages –** *April's packet will be ordered the 19th, so the end of next week. If there is anyone on the fence taking the exam, maybe nudge them.*
    ii. **Referee badges (round referee patch for blazer)**
        1. *Hugh - This is included in all new referee packets.*
        2. *Terry – We need more. I thought about getting them magnetized so people can take them off if the weather is bad, rather than forcing you to sew them.*
        3. *Bryan – I have a homemade magnetic one. I have a stiffener for the patch. It's a nice blue blazer. You can wear it to a bunch of non-rowing events.*
    iii. **Pins – Referee and Emeritus**
        1. *Hugh – I haven't talked to Annette this week, but they should have arrived. No?*
        2. *Elaine – Annette told me it'd be about six weeks for the pins. Apparently, they were just ordered.*
        3. *Terry – I was told that World Rowing umpires like to take pins to trade at USRowing events.*
        4. *Kathleen – I've given some pins to international referees that I've worked with a lot.*
        5. *Terry – I feel uncomfortable using our Referee Logo as a trading pin.*
        6. *Kathleen – Usually I'm using the US blade pin.*
        7. *Terry – Annette says she's made some white round pins with the USRowing referee logo. I think that should only be worn by USRowing referees.*
        8. *Bryan – If you've got a World Rowing license, doesn't that mean they could work in the US?*
        9. *Terry – Yes, but they'd need permission to work a domestic event.*
        10. *Kris – I'm wondering about Trademark and Copyright. If Regatta Print is making and selling these pins without permission, that could be problematic.*
        11. *Terry – There used to be a crossed-oar pin with USA. Maybe we should codify that in the IOP somewhere. Maybe Hugh and I can work on some wording.*
        12. ***TO DO:** Terry and Hugh to write about trading referee pins in the IOP.*

iv. **Blade awards – 20 yr. awards – 2023 Awards – notification, physical award, when to give, story on USR website.**

1. *Hugh – No updates there. They've been ordered.*
2. *Derek – Is the spreadsheet out there yet?*
3. *Hugh – No spreadsheet yet.*
4. *Elaine – Any update on the NK stuff?*
5. *Hugh – No. I will make that a priority next week after our prep for Regionals.*
6. *Elaine – At the Olympic Trials, Kathleen did a nice presentation to Lyn Wylder.*
7. *Hugh – Our communication team is putting together a post to thank referees.*
8. *Elaine – Are the official awards somewhere?*
9. *Hugh – There's been a little bit of a hiccup. I don't have an exact date now.*

h. 2024 Data Tracking –

	March 31, 2024	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024	September 2024
Clinics completed	**283**					
Full Referee	**221**					
Assistant Referees	**227**					
Candidates	**55**					

i. Recruiting – do we have a good # of active candidates?

i. **239 active candidates in RefCorps -** coordinators reviewed and sent results to Hugh?

j. Clarification of Inclusion training

i. *Terry – The DEI woman has updated the training, per the recommendations made.*
ii. *Elaine – So this will go out to the Chiefs to disseminate to the referees?*
iii. *Hugh – Yes.*
iv. *Mike – Is there a policy that was passed, and some training for our people?*
v. *Terry – No, there's no specific training on how to start Singles Races. The instructions are instead of saying Mr. Smith, Mr. Murphy, you'd say Vesper Smith, Union Murphy.*
vi. *Kathleen – I can dig out the email I sent to my region so that you know the verbiage I used. You can take it or leave it. I'm happy to send that around.*
vii. *Terry – I'm talking to Jenny tomorrow, but she's said that she's accepting the Motion that we previously discussed. She agreed to that.*
viii. *Letcher – I think using the Crew Name is sufficient.*
ix. *Terry – We don't have to be set in stone. We'll do what USRowing requests this year. I'll keep you updated on what Jenny has to say.*

k. 2024 Planning subcommittee meeting at RowFest – focus on Recruiting, Development (incl Evaluating), Retention

i. **what are the pain points?**
ii. **what do need to do to grow the corps?**

l. Separating out Chief status for 2025 - we agreed last meeting to move forward with this and Jim is the contact for the College.

i. Discussion - existing full refs and transition to new?

m. Evaluating referees in '24 – use old clinician system?

i. *Terry – The question was who the evaluations are being used on.*
ii. *Mike – I had asked my Clinicians to do the evaluations, but they'd be announced.*
iii. *Terry – The question is, what's the purpose of them?*
iv. *Derek – We use them. I was hoping to use them at Dogwood. It's training. We have a bunch of assistants.*
v. *Terry – I think for assistants, no question. If I'm a Clinician and I'm asked to complete an evaluation on everyone I work with, there will be a lot of full referees.*
vi. *Mike – I'd like to switch gears on evaluations if I may, and talk about evaluations at the National Regatta level, that everyone should be evaluated at that level.*
vii. *Terry – We would do the surveys. We've had the surveys in the past, which includes a rating of the Chief and Deputy. Did they do a good job? What could they do better?*
viii. *Mike – The evaluations of the referees need to be done as a tool. Everyone at the regatta needs to know they're going to be evaluated.*
ix. *Terry – What if we called it feedback?*
x. *Mike – Call it Blue Bus. It's still an evaluation.*
xi. *Terry – It's constructive feedback instead of a rating.*
xii. *Mike – It's just an evaluation of a person's skills at a regatta.*
xiii. *Elaine – Did you mean only at Nationals?*
xiv. *Mike – We can start at Nationals.*
xv. *Elaine – Who's doing the evaluating?*
xvi. *Mike – The Deputy with the Chief*
xvii. *Letcher – There's no time. At Harsha, we sent them out, they did their thing. With racing going on, it'd take me an hour to get to the Start to see how things are going.*
xviii. *Mike – What happens next year when it comes to a National Regatta?*
xix. *Letcher – Yes, you'll get those reviews, because those are the people who need attention. If 8 of 10 referees don't need my intervention, I can't say I observed them.*
xx. *Kathleen – I'm going to back Letcher up here. There is no time.*
xxi. *Elaine – I one hundred percent agree with Letcher that there is no time.*
xxii. *Mike – What are you talking about Evaluation? It's a simple evaluation. I haven't been a National Chief yet, so I don't necessarily know.*
xxiii. *Kris – I've seen discussions in Chief Reports about problem individuals. That's a separate thing, rather than trying to review everyone's performance.*
xxiv. *Terry – We did ask the Chiefs of each Nationals to send me a confidential list regarding the performance of their jury members in 2023.*
xxv. *Elaine – The other part of that is that the Deputy needs to have a discussion with that referee at the regatta. To wait for the report to come out is inappropriate.*
xxvi. *Terry – That's the problem we have with this Evaluation System.*
xxvii. *Elaine – If a referee comes to me asking why they didn't get selected for Nationals this year, is that when I tell them that the Chief last year said they sucked?*
xxviii. *Jess – If we're talking about Paragraph D-15 in the IOP, I think it needs to be deleted and completely rewritten, to focus on feedback evaluations and not ranking.*

3. Next Meetings – *April 24 at 7:30p EDT; May 8; (May 22); June 12; (June 26); July 10; August 14*

4. Adjourn – *MOTION to Adjourn by Kris; seconded by Jess. All in favor. 9:20pm.*

USRowing Drone Policy *Updated March 31, 2021* [*Updated to define where a drone may operate and who shall operate the drone.]*

USRowing recognizes the need to provide competitors, spectators, and other people in attendance at regattas a fair and safe environment, while continuing to provide spectators, coaches, and fans - both onsite and via live streaming - a more dynamic environment in which to watch and enjoy the sport of rowing.

The overarching principle of the USRowing drone policy is that drones should be positioned in such a way that the safety and health of every participant, spectator, and volunteer during the competition and across the entire field of play is paramount. After a year of implementation, USRowing has made some revisions and has updated its policies regarding the use of drones at USRowing Registered Regattas.

The Local Organizing Committee, working in conjunction with the chief referee, is charged with approving the use of all drones at the regatta venue both on shore and in the field of play, including the airspace above the course (in accordance with local and FAA drone regulations for the specific venue).

Any experienced and licensed drone operator wishing to operate a drone at a regatta venue, including media, competing organizations (including athletes, coaches, support personnel, parents or fans) or spectators must have prior approval from the LOC. The LOC, in conjunction with the chief referee, will set the exact approval procedures required at each regatta, including any specific on-site check-in procedures required prior to operating a drone.

Any drones operating in or near the field of play must be operated by an experienced and licensed drone operator. The drone itself must remain at least 10 meters behind the crew in its lane and at least 10 meters above the highest point of the referee launch. A drone shall not follow the race in front of the crews. At no time may a drone fly directly above a crew or referee in the field of play.

A drone may follow racing on the side of the course, but it must remain at least five meters away from the outside lane and 10 meters above the highest point of the referee launch. A drone may not follow racing on the side of the course being used as the travel lane for launching crews unless there is enough space to have both a five-meter buffer between the drone and the side of the course, as well as a five-meter buffer between the drone and the travel lane.

Projects moving forward.

- 2024 Photo Library
- Tracking candidates through Assistant exam
- Onboarding info/docs for new Committee members.

IOP Deadlines

- Rule Changes, open Comments 10/1 - 10/21
- Referees for Consideration for National events: 1/15 - may need a be adjusted for 2024.
- Committee Recommendations for rule change to the Board: 11/15
- Nominations for At-large Committee members: 11/15
- Regional Coordinator nomination: No later than 11/30
- RefCorps Data Call: 12/31

Summary of To-Do Items:

- TO DO: Committee to review process for rules changes. In past years, submissions have been made that if someone had worked with the subcommittee, they would have been clearer and avoided concerns and had a better chance of being accepted.
- TO DO: Review Confidentiality / Non-Disclosure Agreement revisions for Referee Committee
- TO DO: Insurance Broker discussion update regarding our best status with the organization – i.e., volunteer, employee, contractor, etc.
- TO DO: Draft flow chart of actions for candidates.
- TO DO: Hugh to investigate a new survey platform or another solution so that referees could complete the survey multiple times if they worked multiple events.
- TO DO: Referee Committee to review IOP Sections F (Mission & Purpose of the Referee Committee), G (Responsibilities of Members of the Committee), H (Structure of the Referee Committee), and I (Referee Committee – Conduct of Business).
- TO DO: Investigate Rule Book Formatting in the Fall Budget Discussion – Specifically Spiraling
- TO DO: Get something in writing concerning referees as volunteers/contractors/employees.
- TO DO: Terry and Hugh to write something about trading pins in the IOP.